

VZCZCXRO8505
OO RUEHQU
DE RUEHPU #0374/01 0671314
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 071314Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7826
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 1827
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1632
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY 1055
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1454
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 000374

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR
S/CRS
INL FOR KEVIN BROWN AND ANGELIC YOUNG
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [HA](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#)
SUBJECT: HAITI MONTHLY: FEBRUARY, 2008

PORT AU PR 00000374 001.2 OF 003

11. (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified -- please protect accordingly.

12. (U) Summary: This is a monthly report on various topics of interest which do not merit a full reporting cable. End summary.

13. (SBU) LAVALAS PARTISANS MARCH ON 4TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARISTIDE DEPARTURE

A crowd of several thousand supporters of the pro-Aristide party Fanmis Lavalas marched peacefully in Port au Prince on February 29, the fourth anniversary of Aristide's departure from Haiti. Led by leading party figures such as Annette Auguste (So Anne), Rene Civil, and parliamentary deputy Jonas Coffy, the crowd paraded past the U.S. Embassy, the French Embassy, and the presidential palace. The size of the crowd was far lower than the 30,000 figure party figures had earlier predicted. The main demand was the immediate return to Haiti of the former president, who Lavalas partisans continue to claim was "'kidnapped'" in 2004. Even Lavalas elected officials who in private say they do not support Aristide's return dutifully chanted the required slogan during the demonstration.

14. (SBU) CNDDR HEAD FILS-AIME IGNORES SUMMONS BY PORT-AU-PRINCE PROSECUTOR

Director of the National Committee on Dismantlement, Disarmament and Reinsertion (CNDDR) Alex Fils-Aime, refused a summons for questioning from Port au Prince Chief Prosecutor Claudy Gassant the week of February 18. Claiming that his position as a high level state official exempts him from such summons, Fils-Aime publicly accused Gassant of repeatedly abusing his authority, thereby becoming a factor "'destabilizing the state, particularly the Haitian National Police (HNP).'" Gassant thus far has failed to reply in public or to mention the reason for the summons. The press speculates that Gassant wants to question Fils-Aime for his opposition to the release of scores of inmates held for long periods without formal indictment or trial -- some of whom have committed violent crimes, including kidnapping, following their release. This is the latest incident in the ongoing conflict between Gassant and HNP Director Mario

Andresol.

15. (U) HAITIAN AGREEMENT TO INCREASE POULTRY AND EGG PRODUCTION

The Ministries of Agriculture and Women Conditions, the International Development Bank (IDB) and FAES (Economic and Social Assistance Foundation) on February 23 signed an agreement for USD 51 million to increase national production of poultry and eggs. The program will debut in six communes in the West Department and three communes in the North-East Department. This program is a product of the recent ban in imports of poultry and eggs from the Dominican Republic imposed due to the H5N2 avian flue outbreak there. Secretary of State for Agriculture Joanas Gue, a Haitian delegation and experts from the International Organization of Animal Health (OIE) are traveling to the DR on March 3 to conduct an assessment. Gue also announced that there is no trace of the H5N2 virus in Haiti.

16. (U) POROUS BORDERS

The Support Group for Repatriates and Refugees (GARR) reported that more than 5,000 Haitians either crossed or attempted to cross the Haitian-Dominican border in January. According to GARR, men, women and children were crossing at points in the Northeast, Center, and West departments. GARR's press statement implied that many of the crossings were illegal, with smugglers charging about 1,500 Haitian gourdes (\$41) per person. Whereas organizers of the border crossings in Thomassique, located in the Center department, earnestly attempted to smuggle their paying clients across the border, organizers in the West department (where Port-au-Prince is located) often misled their paying clients by depositing them in Fonds Verrettes, Haiti, announcing that they were in the Dominican Republic. (Note: GARR correctly noted that the GOH's fight against corruption must include the land borders because corrupt officials on both sides of the Haitian-Dominican border are implicated, either turning a blind eye to illegal border crossings or profiting directly from such crossings. End note.)

17. (SBU) PREVAL WANTS FASTER PROGRESS ON FINANCIAL CRIMES PROSECUTIONS

President Preval called for a briefing February 22 by Department of Treasury Office of Technical Assistance advisors. The President asked OTA advisors to outline impediments in the identification and prosecution of financial crimes cases and said clear and measurable progress is essential to respond to public concerns about corruption. Preval pressured Minister of Justice Magloire to equip offices of the judicial police investigators (BAFE offices), ensure appropriate salaries were offered to BAFE investigators, and immediately identify prosecutors and magistrates with financial expertise who can swiftly act on cases. OTA advisors returned March 2 and plan to work intensively with BAFE in the review of suspicious cases.

18. (SBU) CONTROVERSY CONTINUES AT FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT

Former investigating judge Jean Ostrict Hercules was named February 29 to replace Central Financial Information Unit (UCREF) Director Jean-Yves Noel. Some media reports criticized Hercules for not doing enough as a sitting judge to ensure prosecutions in the murder of Radio Haiti journalist Jean Dominique and bodyguard Jean Claude Louissaint in 2000. Hercules allegedly cited personal security concerns to justify his decision to return the cases to the Civil Court. Noel, whose term recently expired, made the list of candidates, but was not recommended for selection by the National Committee against Money Laundering (CNLBA) due to questions about management and operational transparency. Noel has also been accused of blocking the transfer of suspect financial crimes cases to the investigating arm of the police -- BAFE. (Note: Minister of Justice Rene Magloire swore in Hercules at UCREF offices March 3. End note.)

19. (U) GOH PREPARES FOR APRIL INTERNATIONAL DONOR CONFERENCE

Prime Minister Alexis presided over a meeting with donor country representatives February 26 to discuss preparations for a donor conference to be held April 25 in Port-au-Prince.

The GoH plans to reach an agreement with key donors on financing the medium-term Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRSP) devised by the GoH in November. Approximately USD 4 billion will be required over a three-year period to implement the GPRSP. GoH interlocutors note the GPRSP is primed for success due to broad participation by the Haitian public and civil society, as well as consultations with the donor community. A conference secretariat, headed by former Minister of Planning and External Cooperation Anthony Dessources, has been established to organize the April conference.

110. (U) COMMISSION ON SECURITY PROMOTES HAITIAN MILITARY

On February 19, poloffs met with journalist/historian Georges Michel, member of the Presidential Commission for Reflection on the Reinforcement of Security, a think-tank organized to explore the feasibility of reinstituting a national army in Haiti. Michel said the Commission supports the reconstitution of a small national army of about 3,000 troops, underscoring that the army would specialize in defensive warfare only. The HNP, not the army, would remain the first line in the defense of civilians, to avoid the military's past abuse of authority against civilians. The commission's final report will be released in October, and will be made available to the public.

111. (U) GOH PROPOSES TO INCREASE DAILY MINIMUM WAGE

The GOH on February 28 announced that it wanted to increase the legal minimum wage from 70 Haitian gourdes (\$1.92) per day to 150 Haitian gourdes (\$4.11) per day, or an increase of 114%. The GOH's proposed figure is a compromise between the minimum salaries advocated by the labor unions and by the business sector. (Note. Even though Steven Benoit, a Lespwa parliamentary member, has been advocating an increase in the minimum salary since the latter half of 2007, the GOH's proposal represents just one attempt to address the growing political pressure to initiate measures to alleviate the increasing costs of living. The GOH has yet to present the bill to change the minimum salary to parliament. End note.) Private sector reaction thus far to proposal has been negative.

112. (U) POLICE BLOTTER

On February 28, the Haitian National Police (HNP) fired police officer Daniel Lafontant, who was accused of violently assaulting Signal FM radio journalist Tom Dumond for taking photos at a crime scene. Inspector Pierrot Jean-Coute, in charge of the initial investigation, also received a letter from the HNP criticizing him for having mishandled the investigation.

113. (U) HNP ARREST UPDATE

Separately, the HNP announced that it made 400 arrests (two of which were for kidnappings) between February 19 - 25. (Note: The HNP makes periodic announcements regarding the number of arrests for specific periods. The problem remains, however, that the judicial system cannot process the detainees quickly enough, resulting in overcrowded police and prison jails. Since the HNP and the penitentiaries do not have the facilities to house the detainees, the Chief Prosecutor has begun to periodically release inmates. Fort-nine inmates including 8 women, 5 children and 36 men were released during the first weekend of March. End note.)
SANDERSON